Accountability Report

2015–2016

Communications Nova Scotia

NOVA SCOTIA

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Accountability Statement

The accountability report of Communications Nova Scotia for the year ended March 31, 2016 is prepared pursuant to the Finance Act and government policies and guidelines. These authorities require the reporting of outcomes against Communications Nova Scotia's Statement of Mandate for the fiscal year just ended. The reporting of the Communications Nova Scotia outcomes necessarily includes estimates, judgements and opinions by Communications Nova Scotia management.

We acknowledge that this Accountability Report is the responsibility of Communications Nova Scotia management. The report is, to the extent possible, a complete and accurate representation of outcomes relative to the goals and priorities set out in the Communications Nova Scotia 2015-2016 Statement of Mandate.

Original signed by
Hon. Zach Churchill
Minister of Communications Nova Scotia

Original signed by
Laura Lee Langley
Deputy Minister of Communications Nova Scotia

Message from the Minister

Communications Nova Scotia (CNS) plays an important role in ensuring Nova Scotians have access to important information about government programs and services. Working closely with departments, CNS uses a variety of tools to reach the public and is continually working to connect with Nova Scotians in ways that are accessible and meet their needs.

While we maintain use of our traditional communications tools to reach Nova Scotians, we are increasing efforts and focusing on use of social media and other on-line tools. Now more than ever, Nova Scotians are relying on social media to both access information and engage with their government. CNS continues to adapt its approach to ensure we are responding to the on-line information needs of citizens.

CNS also continues to provide services in the most effective and efficient way possible. On-line measures and other evaluation tools provide improved measurement opportunities, to make sure information is reaching intended audiences. These same measures are also helping to shape the future direction of the government website, which is now used by 75 per cent of Nova Scotians to access information.

New ways to share information, communicate with and hear directly from Nova Scotians are emerging at a rapid pace. CNS will continue to support government efforts by making the most of these opportunities.

Original signed by
Hon. Zach Churchill
Minister of Communications Nova Scotia

Financial Results

Budget Context Chart

Communications Nova Scotia			
	2015-2016 Estimate	2015-2016 Actuals	2016-2017 Estimate
Program & Service Area	($thousands)	($thousands)	($thousands)
Gross Departmental Expenses:			
Office of the Associate Deputy Minister	1216	1142	1118
Client Services	626	625	732
Communications Planning	1074	1174	981
Communication Services	1241	1039	1079
Marketing	2661	2591	2507
Total Gross Departmental Expenses	6818	6571	6417
Additional Information:			
Ordinary Recoveries	454	243	403
Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs)	90.5	100.9	86.5

Note:

Estimates/Actuals: All estimates/actuals should be rounded to the nearest thousand.

FTE's for Departments: Rounding should follow what appears in 1.1 of the Estimates book.

FTE's for PSO's In accordance with what appears in the Nova Scotia Estimates Supplementary Detail, all FTE information should be rounded to the nearest tenth.

Strategic Outcomes

As government's centralized full-service communications agency, CNS provides communications expertise to departments and offices, ensuring Nova Scotians are aware of government initiatives, and how to access government programs and services.

This centralized model, legislated under the Public Service Act, means better coordination across departments and offices; value to the Nova Scotia taxpayer on products and services; access to expertise; central delivery and knowledgeable procurement of communications services; and consistency of communications standards and services throughout government.

CNS is committed to continuous improvement. Communications is an evolving industry, therefore change is necessary to meet the needs of the audiences we serve. CNS continually evaluates its approaches and refines internal processes to keep up with evolving technology and communications and marketing practices, helping to ensure effective and efficient use of taxpayers' money.

The following strategic outcomes guided the Agency's work in 2015-2016.

Strategic Outcome 1

Nova Scotians are aware of government priorities, programs and services and how to access them.

Strategic Outcome 2

Government departments and offices are compliant with and aware of policies and guidelines under the legislated authority of CNS.

Strategic Outcome 3

Effective delivery of communications and marketing expertise to government.

Measuring our Performance

Strategic Outcome 1

Nova Scotians are aware of government priorities, programs and services and how to access them.

Performance Measure 1

Outcome

Awareness scores and research results on identified government priorities and programs.

Target

Results will show increased awareness of government programs and services and how to access them, compared to baseline measures.

Actual Measures

Communications Nova Scotia conducts public opinion, behaviour and attitude research on behalf of government. CNS uses quantitative and qualitative research results to inform communications/marketing strategy, set benchmark measures and enable evaluation of effectiveness.

With an eye on fiscal responsibility, CNS endeavours to use the most effective and cost-friendly methods to perform research. These methods regularly provide directional results that can then be used to determine the best communications mediums.

The following are examples of a few of the government priorities, programs and/or services for which there were targeted communications efforts or for which the results will be used to plan future targeted efforts.

Graduate to Opportunity

A campaign to increase awareness of the Graduate to Opportunity program was implemented between January 14 and March 31, 2016 targeting small to medium sized businesses.

Prior to the launch of the campaign, unaided and aided awareness of the program was measured among Nova Scotians. The tool used was an omnibus survey that included the general population.

Results from this omnibus, while not a pure measure of our target audiences, are an indicator of the awareness of those audiences, and therefore we can extrapolate a low measure as a result. Results showed:

- One in six (16%) can recall a salary rebate program to support small business in hiring recent university graduates; similar to baseline of 17% in Autumn 2014
    - Across the population, awareness is higher among older residents
- Slightly over one in ten (13%) recall having heard the name of the program (aided recall), similar to baseline results from Autumn 2014 (15%)
    - Men are more likely than women to be aware of the program (aided recall)

Source: Autumn 2015 Atlantic Quarterly omnibus

Using the results from the general population research, a campaign targeting young Nova Scotians - specifically post-secondary students - as a target audience was developed. Following the campaign, awareness of the program among key stakeholders (parents, post-secondary students and employers) was measured.

Specific results include:

- Among post-secondary students, 30% reported being aware of the program (aided and unaided) and 31% of parents (aided and unaided) reported being aware; employers felt the program was relevant to their business and were interested in learning more about it.
- New graduates in particular, 61%, are interested in learning more about the program (10% of new graduates were aware of the program)

Source: Graduate to Opportunity Awareness and Perception Study April 2016 (baseline)

Mental Health

Government launched its five-year mental health and addictions strategy, *Together We Can*, in May 2012. The goal of the strategy is to change the way people receive mental health and addictions treatment. In the fall of 2015, research into general awareness around supports (what is available and where) was conducted.

Results from this research, while not a pure measure of our target audiences, are an indicator of the awareness of those audiences, and therefore we can extrapolate measures as a result. The following results serve as baseline measures on public awareness of mental health treatment and addiction services. Results will assist in the development of future communications objectives.

- When provided a list of various mental health and addiction services, aided awareness is high
    - Most residents are aware you can access family doctor (91%), Kids Help Phone (90%) emergency department (90%), or in-patient hospital treatment (82%)
    - There are reasonable levels of awareness of community-based programs (59%), the NSHA crisis telephone line (54%), private treatment (52%), publicly funded treatment (52%), and online support (46%). These results, while reasonable, indicate areas of focus and will guide future communications work.
    - Across the population women are more likely than men to be aware of in-patient treatment and the NSHA crisis telephone line.
    - Younger residents and those with higher education are more likely to know about a family doctor, Kids Help Phone, and in-patient hospital services

- Unaided, there is uncertainty among Nova Scotians regarding what mental health and addiction services treatment options are available, with nearly one-half (45%) unable to recall, any services of this type
    - 6% believe there are no services or not enough services
    - 16% are aware of publically provided services (mental health crisis line, hospital inpatient care, etc.)

Source: Autumn 2015 Atlantic Quarterly (baseline)

Culture Action Plan

Stakeholder and public consultations are being conducted by Communities, Culture and Heritage (CCH) to inform government's first Culture Action Plan. Online Stakeholder consultations were held from December 4, 2015 to March 7, 2016 and an online survey resulted in 1,036 completed responses. Public engagement sessions began on May 29, 2016.

The following results serve as baseline measures while public and stakeholder consultations are being conducted. Communications objectives will be developed as actions from the plan are rolled-out.

- Respondents were less likely to agree that they felt well informed about cultural events taking place in the province (65%) and their communities (67%)
- Awareness of government's Action Plan for Culture was low at 12% overall (aided and unaided awareness)

- As might be expected, awareness is much higher among those who consider themselves to be involved in the Culture Sector (26% compared to 8%)
- Awareness also higher amongst older respondents, retired and those in the middle to higher income groups.

Source: MQO omnibus, February 2016 (baseline)

Performance Measure 2

Outcome

Appropriate web analytics measures on identified government priority sites.

Target

Increased quality web traffic to identified key government priority sites.

Actual Measures

Nova Scotians are online and they expect government to be there with them. Online communications and social media are helping government share important information with citizens.

- 85% of Nova Scotians have high speed internet access at home (on par with national average)
  - *Source: Corporate Research Associate's 2016 Digital Lifestyles Report*
- Of online Nova Scotians, 75% report having visited novascotia.ca in the past year and 36% report visiting the government website at least once per month
  - Top 5 reasons include - to get information on programs and services (63%), information on upcoming events (46%) and tourism information (46%), to apply for government programs or services (40%), or find contact information for government departments or MLAs (40%)
    Source: Citizen Online Activity Study, July /August 2015

The following are examples of a few of the government priorities, programs and/or services for which there were targeted communications efforts or for which the results will be used to plan future targeted efforts.

Refugees/Immigration

A dedicated web page was created and launched on November 17, 2015, as a tool for the public to support new refugees. The site received 1,083 visits that day.

- Peak visits were on December 11, 2015 with 1,490 visits
    - A news release issued on December 10 outlined information on drop-off centres, 211 information line and required items, driving the traffic to the webpage
- 211 also experienced an increase in number of calls. Call volume to 211 in December reached over 4,000 compared to approximately 2,250 the previous month.
- There was a total of 12,054 visits to the main page with an additional 1,219 visits to the donation drop-off centre information page.
    - Drop-off centre was closed for donations on January 5, 2016 due to overwhelming response. A news release was issued on December 30, 2015 announcing the closure.

Make it Here

This campaign was created to encourage younger Nova Scotians who have education, but little experience, to apply to newly created positions within the public service. This was in response to research and an overall general feeling that "getting started" in Nova Scotia is difficult.

The Make It Here landing page included links to the new jobs, as well as funding programs that are available to businesses to hire new workers. It was meant to provide one stop for those that either had little job experience, but education in an area, and for businesses who need assistance to bring in new employees.

- Compared to the previous fiscal year, career-page-related increases were seen on:
    - /searchjobs +19.09% (72,613 vs 60,974 visits)
    - /job-search-sites +106.69% (9,020 vs. 4,364 visits)
    - /educationandtraining +9.83% (6,959 vs. 6,336 visits)
    - /looking-work +92.96% (6,163 vs. 3,194 visits)
- Referrals from social media increased:
    - Visits from Facebook increased by 165.49%
    - Visits from Twitter increased by 190.91%
- Visits from search (organic) increased from 50.3% last year to 61.2% during the reporting period
- The new vs. returning visitor mix shifted more towards returning visitors

        - April 1, 2014 - March 31, 2015: 59.7% New, 40.3% returning
        - April 1, 2015 - March 31, 2016: 47.1% New, 52.9% returning
    - Mobile use was up 29.58% over the previous period: 35,777 sessions vs. 27,609 for the previous period.

Performance Measure 3

Outcome

Engagement by and satisfaction of Nova Scotians with government social media platforms.

Target

Increased level of engagement reported by users of government social media platforms.

Actual Measures

Social media use by Nova Scotians has increased notably over the past year. Social media is helping government share important information with Nova Scotians.

- Online Nova Scotians are aware of government Facebook (40%) and the provincial government's Twitter (@GovNS) account (36%)
- Of those aware of government's Twitter accounts, 36% report reading tweets, most popular being TIR, Education and Environment

Source: Citizen Online Activity Study, July/August 2015 (benchmark)

The following are examples of a few of the government priorities, programs and/or services for which there were targeted communications efforts or for which the results will be used to plan future targeted efforts.

Budget 2015

#NSBudget: Social media activity for Budget Day 2015 was largely centred on the Department of Finance and Treasury Board Twitter account (@NSFinance), with support from the corporate Twitter (@nsgov) and Facebook accounts.

A series of informational posts that broke down the Budget Day schedule were shared by @NSFinance throughout the day.

Sample Results:
@NSFinance analytics:

- An average of 3,400 impressions and overall totals of 457 clicks to read more, 90 retweets and a high engagement rate of 3.1% (the total of all interactions with the posts)

Change Makers

Designed to highlight success in Nova Scotia, the Change Makers project is sharing good news stories that often go overlooked, featuring Nova Scotians and entrepreneurs who are doing interesting things and making a difference in communities across the province.

CNS is using this project as an opportunity to learn by trying different social approaches and evaluating results to inform future activity. For example, some key learnings to date include:

- Evaluating audience engagement on Facebook includes measuring passive engagement (Reach, Views and Completion percentages) and active engagement (Likes, Shares and Comments).
    - Results on Facebook are evaluated as Excellent or Above Average if they exceed a baseline post reach of 5,000. This baseline was set based on tracking results of government social media activity and best practices. Results on Twitter were evaluated as Excellent if they exceeded a base line Impressions rate of 3,000, based on government sector standards, best practices and comparing similar campaigns.

Mental Health

CNS developed a digital social media 'road map' for discussing mental health issues, and provided content and created graphics to be used by DHW and partners (NSHA, Mental Health Foundation). Targeted activity occurred on Bell Let's Talk day (January 27) by multiple organizations under a shared hashtag (#NSMentalHealth).

- After conducting an online audit for how someone would seek help for mental health issues, and using the previously referenced research conducted in the Fall of 2015, CNS created a stand-alone mental health resource page (novascotia.ca/help) that pulled content from various sources into one page
    - This page received 2,336 page views

- From February to March, the number of page views increased 50.2% (427 vs 291)

- Video content and text posts geared at providing citizens with information on resources and programs were released over the course of several weeks.
  - 16 posts from January 12 to April 14 resulted in a total reach of 290,370; total reactions (likes and loves) 976; 614 shares and 98 comments
  - Posts that included video were "boosted" with a paid campaign

Performance Measure 4

Outcome

Results in meeting objectives of significant marketing communications campaigns

Target

Established marketing communications objectives are met

Actual Measures

Under the Public Service Act, CNS is responsible for centralized delivery of advertising services for government departments and offices. This includes Operational Advertising (<$25,000) and Significant Advertising (>$25,000). The legislative amendments and new guidelines and policy introduced in December 2013 ensure advertising is non-partisan and makes government accountable for the advertising it does. Centralizing paid advertising supports coordination across government departments and offices, consistency of standards, and value for money for Nova Scotia taxpayers.

Communications Nova Scotia's approach to advertising is guided by the principles of timeliness, accuracy, effectiveness, non-partisanship and fiscal responsibility.

Significant Marketing Communications campaigns for 2015-2016 included:

- 211/811/911
- Youth distracted driving
- Graduate to Opportunity
- Work zone safety
- Gambling – Take 5
- HARP
- Select Nova Scotia

Results of marketing communications campaigns are reported in the annual Advertising Report tabled with the Legislature. Refer to the Government Advertising Report for 2015-2016 for results, to be released in Summer 2016.

Strategic Outcome 2

Government departments and offices are compliant with and aware of policies and guidelines under the legislated authority of CNS.

Performance Measure 1

Outcome

Consistent implementation of corporate brand across departments and platforms.

Target

Compliance with corporate brand.

Actual Measure

In 2014-2015, government introduced a corporate visual identity. A consistent government brand eliminates communications barriers, making it easier for citizens to get the information they need, in a voice they can understand and trust. Eliminating competing logos from government allows our audience to recognize more easily when government is speaking to them. The Public Service Act was amended to legislate departments and offices to work with CNS to deliver communications products and services including centralized delivery of advertising services. These measures ensure coordination across departments and offices, consistency of standards in communications products and services and value for money for Nova Scotia taxpayers.

- CNS developed an education program to increase awareness and understanding about the corporate brand, identity management and visual platform and presented to all senior executive teams.
- All requests for communications services are audited for compliance with the corporate brand. CNS reviews all creative before delivery to client to ensure consistent implementation of the brand.
- CNS will conduct ongoing audits and reviews of communications products. Ongoing management of the identify exemption process will capture, evaluate and eliminate individual identifiers when appropriate.

Results

- 100% compliance
    - Number of logo exemption requests – two received in 2015-2016
    - Number of logos approved for exemption – two
    - Number of logos denied exemption – 0
    - Pending review – 0

Performance Measure 2

Outcome

Percentage of departmental advertising booked through CNS.

Target

100% of government advertising booked through CNS.

Actual Measure

Under the Public Service Act, CNS is responsible for centralized delivery of advertising services for government departments and offices. This includes Operational Advertising (<$25,000) and Significant Advertising (>$25,000). The legislative amendments and new guidelines and policy introduced in December 2013 ensure advertising is non-partisan and makes government accountable for the advertising it does. Centralizing paid advertising supports coordination across government departments and offices, consistency of standards, and value for money for Nova Scotia taxpayers.

Results of government marketing communications campaigns are reported in the annual Advertising Report tabled with the Legislature. Refer to the Government Advertising Report for 2015-2016 for results, to be released in Summer 2016.

Results

- 100% of departmental advertising was booked through CNS
- A non-compliance process has been established for any advertising deemed to have not been booked through CNS as required.
    - To date, no non-compliance issues have been noted.
- The second annual Government Advertising Report will be released in Summer 2016.

Strategic Outcome 3

Effective delivery of communications and marketing expertise to government.

Performance Measure 1

Outcome

Client Satisfaction Survey

Target

Results of satisfaction measures on effective delivery of communications and marketing expertise. Client Satisfaction Survey to be conducted in 2016-2017 to set baseline measures.

Actual Measure

As indicated in the 2015-2016 Statement of Mandate, a Client Satisfaction Survey will be conducted in the 2016-2017 fiscal year. Ongoing organizational and operational process changes were underway in 2015-2016. Such changes have included:

- Centralized recovery and procurement processes developed, ensuring consistency in application of standards and guidelines
- Centralized project management function implemented with responsibility to manage all incoming projects.
    - 100% of clients served by a single-point-of-contact project manager to ensure a coordinated and efficient approach that uses the most effective tools at lowest cost

Appendix A

Annual Report under Section 18 of the Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act

The Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act was proclaimed into law on December 20, 2011.

The Act provides for government employees to be able to come forward if they reasonably believe that a wrongdoing has been committed or is about to be committed and they are acting in good faith.

The Act also protects employees who do disclose from reprisals, by enabling them to lay a complaint of reprisal with the Labor Board.

A Wrongdoing for the purposes of the Act is:

a) a contravention of provincial or federal laws or regulations
b) a misuse or gross mismanagement of public funds or assets
c) an act or omission that creates an imminent risk of a substantial and specific danger to the life, health or safety of persons or the environment, or
d) directing or counselling someone to commit a wrongdoing

The following is a summary of disclosures received by Communications Nova Scotia.

Information Required under Section18 of the Act	Fiscal Year 2015-2016
The number of disclosures received	0
The number of findings of wrongdoing	0
Details of each wrongdoing (insert separate row for each wrongdoing)	0
Recommendations and actions taken on each wrongdoing (insert separate row for each wrongdoing)	0